814 literary and musical masters, in praise of the happy kolkhoz life and of the creator of all this happiness. The talented collector of [661] folksongs, the composer Terravskii, worked indefatiguably after the revolution. His highly useful efforts were frequently interrupted by the N. K. V. D. and eventually (during the Ezhovsh china) he was banished and the collection of folksongs with his own musical arrangements confiscated and withdrawn from circulation. Soviet ethics do not permit the use of the work of a repressed person, no matter how brilliant. Similar also was the fate of the other collector of folk culture, a man who, already advanced in years, left western Belorussia for the Soviet territory in hopes of finding wide scope for his activity. Part of the work has survived along with its authors -- there is hope that somewhere the works of /10/ Terravskii, Grinevich, and [545] others have been preserved. Folksongs, music, and dances were remembered, written down, and arranged.[2] They were performed with great love by various choruses, musical societies in the countryside (later in kolkhozes) and in workers' clubs. Ensembles organized by the Narkompros[1] performed at concerts and on the radio, presenting their programs to the accompaniment of native instruments.

517 814 The study of local lore was very widespread. It was the best loved activity of the village intellegentsia, especially of the teachers. In those days there was neither bureaucratic banality nor any official plan in these regional studies. It was founded upon their own initiative and inclinations, and a free choice of subjects for investigation and study. Those who pursued it devoted their leisure to the study and description of the folk culture, the historical past and ancient monuments of their region. The local flora and fauna were studied and measures were taken to protect types which were becoming extinct (beaver colonies). In some places they published their own works (Gomel') and organized museums of the local displays. They worked voluntarily and were not paid for it. At first the study of local lore was under the tutelage of the Narkompros[1] of the B. S. S. R. and afterwards of the Academy of Sciences which published a special magazine devoted to the subject called, /Nash Krai /Our Country/.

The Land Problem, Boundaries

● 423 The land question was the most painful and unsettled one in Belorussia. Before the revolution arrangements for the use of the land by the peasantry were different from those in Russia . . . In Belorussia

1 [The People's Commissariat of Public Education of Belorussia -- Analyst]

2 [Beginning about 1920, cf. pp 3-4, category 116 - Analyst]

423 the land was hereditary property, which had the positive results of continual and steady use of the land and the negative one of constant subdivision of the peasant holdings in the country. The Bolshevik uprising did not bring about any significant improvements in the life of the small holders as sovkhozes and kolkhozes were organized on the large estates. Up until 1930, D. Prishchepov, a former Socialist-Revolutionary, was the head of the National Commissariat of Agriculture. He had managed to live abroad and become acquainted with agricultural conditions in Denmark and Germany. Upon his return to Belorussia he contemplated a series of measures which he considered the more useful since they were in accordance with the desires of the great mass of the Belorussian peasantry. So as to increase the land fund and distribute it among those who had little or none, Prishchepov managed to abolish a part, although an insignificant one, of the Soviet farms and also to bring about significant reductions in the land belonging to these establishments. As the basic unit of land to be used, Prishchepov chose the small village of ten to twenty peasant farms, with comfortable farmsteads of up to one hectare in size. /11/
[311] Even in those times it cost him[1] a great effort to prove the advantage of the small village over the large one as a method of land exploitation. The necessity of rapid reconstruction of the system of land tenure in Belorussia was obvious. In the first place there was the question of what to do with the reserve land which had been given for temporary use to the landless peasants and those with small holdings. Then, it was proposed to apportion crowded and disorganized large villages among small ones. Part of the peasantry wanted small separate farms under the new system, but Prishchepov could not officially establish separate farmsteads. In practice it happened as an exception that, when lands were being distributed in the woods, separate farms were
668 cut out as well as small villages. . . To placate the theoreticians, Prishchepov[1] had to assure them that it was very easy to make the transformation from a small village to an agricultural commune. Prishchepov knew quite well how absurd these assurances were, but being one of the leaders of the national movement he was guided by the interests of the country and not by the presuppositions of the
654 Communists which at the time were both unclear and confused. In addition to increasing agricultural assistance Prishchepov[1] introduced a series of measures designed to encourage improvements on the holdings of independent peasants. Various types of agricultural exibition

[1] [D. Prishchepov, head of the National Commissariat of Agriculture, beginning about 1920 to 1930 - Analyst]

654 were widely promoted by Narkomzem where diplomas and testimonials were presented and prizes of goods and cash awarded. All these measures of D. Prishchepov were subsequently brought against him as accusations, to show that he was against the socialist forms of agriculture and that his work was not only harmful but outright sabotage.

423 The "gathering together" of the Belorussian lands and their unification with the B. S. S. R. was completed only in the beginning of 1927 ... The question of consolidating within the B. S. S. R. regions which were tied to it economically as well as having a homogeneous population had been raised several times before the Kremlin ... The problem was not solved until 1924 partly by the annexation of a 000 section of the Vitebsk and Mogilev provinces. On the occasion of the annexation of these regions an extraordinary session of the Central Executive Committee of the B. S. S. R. was convoked, with workers and peasants also participating. The President of the Central Executive Committee of the R. S. F. S. R., M. Kalinin, was present at the session, together with two well-known Comintern figures -- the Poles Felix Kohn and Tomasz Dombalj. During his own speech Dombalj turned to the loge of the Polish counsul and cried out in a burst of revolutionary enthusiasm, "Remember that only we have the right to speak in the name of Poles and peasants!" Dombalj was a deputy to the Polish Sejm and for belonging to the Communist Party had been tried and exchanged for someone in the Soviet Union. The future Soviet Marshall, Tukhachevskii, was also present at the session, and his restrained and correct deportment contrasted with that of the Caucasian, Gai, the commander of the Cavalry Corps, /12/ who paced up and down nervously during his speech and shouted, "We will water our horses in the Vistula yet!" The session was officially designated as a triumphant celebration of the correctness of Soviet policy toward the nationalities. M. Kalinin, by attending, emphasized the "voluntary accession" of the territory of the B. S. S. R.; the Polish Communists who were present demonstrated their solidarity with the Soviets in questions of policy toward minorities, in opposition to the policy of Poland which had taken over western Belorussia while General Zhilunovich forcibly occupied Wilno. The speeches of Tukhachevskii, the deputy director of the Red Army General Staff, and Gai, who had taken part in the raid, on Warsaw, even though it was unsuccessful, bore witness to the unsatisfied pretensions to Poland which were backed up with armed might.

661 Professor Ignatovskii was widely known and very popular for his prominent activities. In those days the G. P. U. did not yet dare to throw him in a cellar and make short work of him. As a result of his suicide there were persistent rumors that the G. P. U. had succeeded in getting Professor Ignatoviskii to name those members of the national movement who had taken upon themselves to check the Soviet regime in Belorussia and establish a democratic system. The professor preferred death, but even before his suicide the movement had been dealt a telling blow by the arrest of the People's Commissar of Agriculture of the B. S. S. R., Dimitrii Prishchepov. Himself a son of the people and a former teacher he was well able to understand the age long striving of the Belorussian peasant for a private farm of his own. He knew the reasons for the backwardness, poverty, and need 241 of the countryside. Before collectivization, his[1] activities had been 423 directed toward strengthening the private working peasant's position 661 by building them homesteads which were generally grouped in small hamlets but frequently isolated. This arrangement gave the peasant wide scope for his own initiative, and he could also draw on state agricultural assistance. /21/ This tendency in the work of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture turned out to be in complete contradiction to the Kremlin's avowed policy of collectivizing agriculture, and besides, an unheard of tempo of collectivization was demanded, with the country's total efforts directed at the destruction of the private peasants' farmstead to be replaced by the other, so-called socialist, form of agriculture. The most prosperous farms were ruined completely and their proprietors assigned to the outlawed category of kulaks -- then they were carted away under inhuman conditions and sent out to the most godforsaken and uninhabited regions of Siberia. The peasants who still remained unsubdued were tagged as podkulachnik' and subjected to public persecution and economic pressure in the form of a high head tax -- in spite of the fact that these peasants were the ones who had most of the diplomas and certificates which the Soviet government had given out for high showings in animal husbandry, gardening, truck 661 farming, etc. The People's Commissariat of Agriculture had to play first violin in this destruction -- in other words it had to destroy

[1] [D. Prishchepov, Peoples Commissar of Agriculture to 1930 - Analyst]

407 outbreak of the German attack, it was estimated that the B.S.S.R had 12,000 tractors, 1,500 combine harvesters, and 20,000 other agricultural machines.

Agricultural Development of Western Byelorussia

241 311 The arable area of the Byelorussian Republic was increased by about 3,597,000 hectares in 1939, when Western Byelorussia was rejoined to the Soviet Union. According to the Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland, London, 1941, this territory in 1938 had 136,000 hectares under cultivation of wheat, 1,132,000 hectares under rye, 664,000 hectares under oats and barley, 518,000 under potatoes, and 60,000 hectares sown to flax.

241 423 Before the incorporation of the western territory into the B.S.S.R., its agriculture was primitive. Eighty to 90 per cent. of the population were engaged in agricultural work, and there was practically no mechanization. After 1939, however, many changes were made. The People's Assembly of Western Byelorussia declared all land, timber, and water resources to be the property of the state, (that is, public property);; and subsequently, 646,000 hectares of land were distributed among the poorer peasants, as well as 540,000 hectares taken from large estates and given to poor and middle-class farmers and to formerly landless hired men. Fourteen thousand hired men and poor peasants also received horses, and 33,400 households received cows.

474 [475] Many of the farmholdings were then organized into collectives; about 1,000 kolkhozes were formed in a short time, and over 100 machine and tractor stations erected. In 1940 these west Byelorussian M.T.S. had 1,500 tractors at their disposal - about 15 per cent. of all the tractors held by the M.T.S. of the Republic.

[727] The process of collectivization in Western Byelorussia was interrupted by the German occupation, which destroyed the Soviet system of land utilization, and at present the work of reorganization is not moving along very rapidly. By 1946 only about 100 collective farms, combining 2,802 individual holdings, had been reorganized and were again functioning; and this is but a small fraction of the peasant population in the western region. However, government officials state that no immediate pressure is being exerted to promote collective farms.

German Devastation of Agriculture

727 241 The German occupation from June 1941 until the summer of 1944 left Byelorussian agriculture exhausted and devastated. The enemy had destroyed 9,200 villages and more than 1,200,000 peasant holdings. Ninety-two state farms and about 10,000 collective farms had been plundered and destroyed. All the food processing plants had been blown up; and over 316 machine and tractor stations had suffered destruction and looting; from them the Republic lost 8,996 tractors, 1,105 harvester combines, and countless numbers of other agricultural machines which the Germans either wrecked or carried off to Germany.

9: Amer. Russ. Inst. (no date) 1950 RCI Belorussia RCI
[Constitution as of July 1, 1947]

CONSTITUTION (FUNDAMENTAL LAW) OF THE BELORUSSIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

Chapter I. The Social Structure

642 Art. 1. The Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic is a socialist state of workers and peasants.

Art. 2. The Soviets of Working People's deputies, which grew and attained strength as a result of the overthrow of the landlords and capitalists, the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the liberation of the Belorussian people from national oppression by tsarism and by the Russian imperialist bourgeoisie and the destruction of the Belorussian nationalist counter-revolution, constitute the political foundation of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Art. 3. In the Belorussian SSR all power belongs to the working people of town and country as represented by the Soviets of Working People's Deputies.

471 Art. 4. The socialist system of economy and the socialist ownership of the means and instruments of production firmly established as a result of the abolition of the capitalist system of economy, the abrogation of private ownership of the means and instruments of production and the elimination of the exploitation of man by man, constitute the economic foundation of the Belorussian SSR.

421 Art. 5. Socialist property in the Belorussian SSR exists either in the form of State property (the possession of the whole people) or in the form of co-operative and collective farm property (property of a collective farm or property of a co-operative association).

475 Art. 6. The land, its natural deposits, waters, forests, mills, factories,
421 mines, rail, water and air transport, banks, communications, large State-organized agricultural enterprises (State farms, machine and tractor stations and the like), as well as municipal enterprises and the bulk of dwelling houses in the cities and industrial localities, are State property, that is, belong to the whole people.

421 Art. 7. The common enterprise of collective farms and co-operative organiza-
474 tions, with their live stock and implements, and the products of the collective farms and co-operative organizations, as well as their common buildings, constitute the common socialist property of the collective farms and co-operative organizations.

[472] In addition to its basic income from the public collective farm enterprise, every household in a collective farm has for its ~~private~~ use a small plot of land attached to the dwelling and, as its ~~private~~ property, a subsidiary establishment on the plot, a dwelling house, live stock, poultry and minor agricultural implements — in accordance with the Rules of the Agricultural Artel.

● 423 Art. 8. The land occupied by collective farms is secured to them for their
474 use free of charge and for an unlimited time, that is, in perpetuity.

472 Art. 9. Alongside the socialist system of economy, which is the predominant form of economy in the Belorussian SSR, the law permits the small private economy of individual peasants and handicraftsmen, based on their personal labour and precluding the exploitation of the labour of others.

421 Art. 10. The right of citizens to personal ownership of their incomes from work and of their savings, of their dwelling houses and subsidiary household